

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 5807

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, UY
SUBJ: URUGUAY'S CATHOLIC BISHOPS ATTEMPT BIALOGUE WITH GOU ON
POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SITUATION

REF: MONTEVIDEO 5655

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. MONS. JOSE GOTTARDI, AUXILIARY
BISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO, HAS PROVIDED COPY OF A LENGTHY MEMO-
RANDUM RECENTLY DIRECTED BY URUGUAYAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
TO TOP LEVEL OF THE GOU IN AN ATTEMPT TO OPEN A CONFIDENTIAL
DIALOGUE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND ON THE GENERAL POLI-
TICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATIONS. THE DOCUMENT, RESPECTFUL IN
TONE AND SOMEWHAT DENSELY REASONED, IS, NEVERTHELESS, A
HARD-HITTING AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE PRESENT
REGIME'S WORST EXCESSES. END SUMMARY.

2. AFTER A LENGTHY INTRODUCTION APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO
ESTABLISH THEIR GOOD WILL, THE BISHOPS COME TO THE POINT:
THE GOU'S CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY HAS TAKEN ON THE
CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEOLOGY. INSTEAD OF AN INSTRUMENT
OF JUDICIAL GUARANTEES, IT HAS BECOME A DOCTRINE WHICH
ACCORDS ALL POSSIBLE POWER AND PREOGATIVE TO THE STATE.
ITS DISCRETIONAL POWER IS NOW SUCH THAT NO ONE CAN OPENLY
QUESTION ITS DECISIONS, WHILE LIBERTY AND INDIVIDUAL
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RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RESTRICTED TO A MINIMUM. HOWEVER, ORDER
AND SECURITY ARE NOT ENDS IN THEMSELVES: THE STATE EXISTS
TO BENEFIT THE INDIVIDUAL, WHOSE RIGHTS TAKE PRIORITY OVER
THOSE OF THE STATE. INDEED, THE PRESENT EXAGGERATED CONCEPT
OF SECURITY SERVES AS A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT TO FUTURE WOULD-
BE TOTALITARIANS.

3. THE BISHOPS CONCEDED THAT URUGUAY HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO MAL-INTENTIONED CRITICISM FROM ABROAD, BUT POINT OUT THAT EVEN GOU OFFICIALS, IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, HAVE CONCEDED THAT INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS ARE BEING CURTAILED IN THE NAME OF COMBATTING TERRORISM. THIS IS A "MORAL ERROR". ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL EXAMPLES IS THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES SURVEILLANCE OF INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS, AND THE IMPACT THIS SURVEILLANCE HAS ON ONE'S ABILITY TO FIND OR RETAIN EMPLOYMENT. A DEROGATORY REPORT, OFTEN ERRONEOUS OR MALICIOUS, EFFECTIVELY DEPRIVES ITS VICTIM OF THE RIGHT TO WORK, EVEN IN PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, AND ENTIRELY WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF DUE PROCESS.

4. WITH REGARD TO NATIONAL POLITICS, THE BISHOPS RECOGNIZE THAT MANY OF ITS PRACTITIONERS HAVE BEHAVED IN A SELFISH, IRRESPONSIBLE, OR EVEN SUBVERSIVE, MANNER. HOWEVER, THEY POINT OUT, JUST AS MANY HONEST AND WELL-INTENTIONED POLITICIANS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF URUGUAY. IN ANY CASE, THE CHURCH REGARDS THE POLITICAL PROCESS AS "A PRIVILEGED FORM" OF HUMAN DISCOURSE, AND A NECESSARY STEP TOWARD NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION.

5. FINALLY, THE BISHOPS INDICATE CONCERN OVER THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CONDITION OF, ESPECIALLY, WORKING CLASS FAMILIES WHOSE LIVING CONDITIONS IN MANY CASES ARE BECOMING INSUPPORTABLE. THEY CALL FOR SOME REDISTRIBUTION OF THE BURDEN OF NATIONAL

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RECONSTRUCTION SO THAT ITS FULL WEIGHT WILL NOT FALL ON THE POOR.

6. SIGNED BY ARCHBISHOP PARTELI AND ALL OF URUGUAY'S NINE BISHOPS, THIS IS THE SECOND SUCH MEMORANDUM DIRECTED TO THE GOU. AN EARLIER COMMUNICATION, SENT LAST FEBRUARY TO THE JOINT STAFF, HAS NEVER BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED. NEITHER HAS THE PRESENT, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL WEEKS HAVE NOW PASSED SINCE ITS TRANSMITTAL. THE BISHOPS STILL HOPE FOR A RESPONSE AND A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE, BUT OUR SOURCE WOULD NOT SPECULATE ON THEIR NEXT STEP IF ONE IS NOT FORTHCOMING. FOR THE PRESENT, THE BISHOPS REGARD THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT AND EVEN THE FACT OF ITS EXISTANCE AS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE.

7. COMMENT. THE CHURCH'S CONTINUING SILENCE OF COURSE FACILITATES THE GOU'S ABILITY TO IGNORE THESE APPROACHES WITH IMPUNITY. GIVEN THE URUGUAYAN CHURCH'S OWN INTERNAL CONFLICTS OVER THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, A PUBLIC POSTURE OF SILENCE IS THE PRICE CURRENTLY REQUIRED FOR UNANIMITY AMONG THE HIERARCHY. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE CHURCH IS WILLING TO TAKE ANY POSITION AT ALL, HOWEVER QUIETLY,

ESPECIALLY ONE AS FORTHRIGHT AS THE PRESENT STATEMENT.

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